

VZCZCXRO4861

PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLH RUEHLN RUEHLZ

RUEHNNEH RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHSK RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG

DE RUEHAA #0194 0371310

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

P 061310Z FEB 09

FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2280

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 4806

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2589

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2454

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 3050

RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000194

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

SCA/CEN; EEB

PLEASE PASS TO USTDA DAN STEIN

ENERGY FOR EKIMOFF/THOMPSON

COMMERCE FOR HUEPER

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: ENERGY OFFICIALS LEAVE US GUESsing
ON THE STATUS OF TAPI TALKS

¶1. (SBU) Poloff met on February 5 with Deputy Minister for Oil and Gas Industry and Mineral Resources Nedirov and officials from the Turkmen State Gas Concern to discuss the status of talks and agreements on development of a Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline. Turkmen officials confirmed that no multi-lateral meetings have taken place since September 2008, and did not know when the parties would meet again. Nedirov, who initially said the agreement was with the Cabinet of Ministers, then changed his answer and said his ministry and Turkmengaz are still reviewing the Heads of Agreement, which contains changes that include India's formal participation in the project. He expressed optimism that the agreement would be approved at the ministerial level and be passed to the Cabinet of Ministers "soon".

¶2. (SBU) He said the sales and purchase agreement is also still under review in his Ministry, and would offer no timeline regarding when the document might move forward. He said the gas and pricing agreement had two parts--a multi-party element that provided a general purchasing framework, and a second element providing for Turkmenistan to negotiate pricing bilaterally with each of the other parties. He did not identify which portions of the agreement needed work.

¶3. (SBU) COMMENT: Nedirov and the unidentified Turkmengaz officials did not seem to be on the same sheet of music throughout the meeting, and all of them appeared to be nonplussed by the arrangement by the MFA of this meeting with one Embassy officer. The MFA may have told them very little regarding the who and what of post's request for a meeting. In the course of the meeting, Nedirov seemed uninformed and often confused, and frequently entered into discussion with the others in Turkmen, either seeking to confirm, clarify, or correct his own information. He seemed to be unaware of the status and present location of the documents that were

central to the purpose of the meeting, and was reluctant to reveal what issues or concerns were at the center of the apparent decision to put the documents into extended review. He was wholly unwilling to comment in any way on issues or questions related to any of the other TAPI partners, which made it impossible to discern what specific issues were holding up the process. Given Nedirov's performance at this meeting, it appears the Turkmen government is not focusing at all on helping this process move forward, and its inability to work through the concern it has about the agreements in the past four months makes it difficult to guess when the next working group meeting, or any progress in general, will take place. END COMMENT.

MILES